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# Patriotism or Financial Stability--What Drives Young Men and Women to Join the United States Armed Forces

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PATRIOTISM OR FINANCIAL STABILITY—WHAT DRIVES YOUNG MEN  
AND WOMEN TO JOIN THE UNITED STATES ARMED FORCES

A Capstone Experience/Thesis Project

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for

The Degree Bachelor of Arts with

Honors College Graduate Distinction at Western Kentucky University

By

Hannah R. Brantley

\*\*\*\*\*

Western Kentucky University  
2014

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2014

## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this project is to determine why men and women continue to join the Armed Forces. I looked at different factors that may be associated with why people join the Armed Forces, and used an online survey to help determine what factor(s) had the most influence on the participants to join. This research focuses on patriotism and benefits. The benefits were then broken into different categories: education, healthcare, housing, and retirement. This research, if conducted on a much larger scale, theoretically could help the Armed Forces understand soldiers' reasoning for joining so that they could put resources and funds into those incentives, if applicable, to allow our Armed Forces to have more personnel to choose from. By being more selective, the Armed Forces could choose the best of what this nation has to offer. This would mean the Armed Forces could choose the most intelligent, and the most qualified for each of their positions creating a military that would be better, faster, and stronger. The implications of this would mean more security for this nation to maintain the personal freedoms every civilian holds dear.

Keywords: Joining Armed Forces, Military, Patriotism, Financial Stability

Dedicated to my family and Sean

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This project has had many influences, and would not have been possible without the support of my professors, cadre, and friends. A special thanks is to be given to Dr. Lauren McClain who has spent countless hours helping me prepare this project, as well as the cadre at Western Kentucky University's Reserve Officer Training Corp who helped make my research a possibility. Without the dedications of these individuals, my research project would still only be a hypothesis.

Secondly, I would like to thank Western Kentucky University's Honors College for giving me the chance to present this research. Without the CE/T, I may not have been able to present my research to other students and faculty around the state of Kentucky. I have been given the chance to show people a sample of what actually drives men and women to join the Armed Forces.

Finally, and most importantly, I would like to thank my family and friends. Without the support of these loved ones, my college experience would not be the same. I would like to thank Mrs. Barbara Terry-Porter and Mrs. Cathy Yates for the financial support they have attributed to my education, and words will never be able to express my gratitude towards their help. I can only hope that I have made all of these individuals

proud of the accomplishments I have been able to obtain while at Western Kentucky University.

## VITA

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The United States Military is composed of the Army, Navy, Marines, and Air Force (the Coast Guard is part of Homeland Security and will not be included in this study). Collectively, there are 1,413,502 Active Duty soldiers in the United States Armed Forces, and there are also 876,956 soldiers who make up the Reserve components of the military (FindTheData, 2012). Out of the 2,290,458 men and women who are components of the United States Military, the question arises, what drives men and women to join our Armed Forces? Is this patriotism, financial stability, or simply a means to acquire an education? With a draft no longer in affect and the decrease in personnel by approximately thirty percent since 1987, the Armed Forces have had to find new ways to encourage and entice men and women to enlist (Thirtle, 2001). According to the Global Issues article “World Military Spending,” the US accounts for 41% of the world total military expenditures (2012, p. 1). These statistics lead people to question whether the decrease in military personnel is due to how much money the military spends, or simply because in 2014 there is not a need for such a large military. According to NBC News, “U.S. Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel recommended drastic cuts of billions of dollars that would take American military forces to its lowest level since before World War II.” The article later goes on to quote Hagel, “As a consequence of large budget cuts, our

future force will assume additional risk in certain areas.” He cited gaps in training and maintenance, and knew that the military would be “stretched thin” if any major conflict broke out. Mr. Hagel believes that the current military force is “larger than we can afford to modernize and keep ready” (Connor & Miklaszewski, 2014, p. 1). As Mr. Hagel shows, many want to downsize the military due to the country’s current financial issues. Even with downsizing, men and women continue to go through strenuous mental and physical training to be a part of the United States Armed Forces, which begs the question of why people continue to join.

Military.com discusses enlistment incentives that range from signing bonuses, student loan repayment, voluntary education programs (ability to continue education while on active duty), and a G.I. Bill that gives educational benefits that are part of these “expenditures” (Enlistment Incentives: Bonuses and Benefits, 2012). The Armed Forces are using money and schooling as enticers, rather than patriotic Uncle Sam posters. In this study, I will specifically examine military benefits, educational opportunities, and overall job satisfaction and how these factors influence a person’s reasoning for joining the US Armed Forces.

## CHAPTER 2

### BACKGROUND AND THEORY

In this chapter I will discuss the different types of benefits that the Armed Forces offers and why they might be important to recruitment. I will then discuss intangible factors, such as acceptance, that might influence a person's decision to enter the military.

#### Educational Benefits in the Armed Forces

In the Armed Forces, there are many educational benefits that are offered to soldiers. These benefits can occur while serving, or after service has been completed. Active Duty, Guard, and Reserves all have their own educational benefits they offer to their soldiers. With that being said, educational benefits are not received in the Armed Forces until certain training is completed, and the proper paperwork is signed through the Veterans' Assistance (VA). The VA offers an incentive known as the Post 9/11 G.I. Bill that typically covers full tuition fees, grants, and a monthly stipend depending on rank and/or time in service (Simon, 2010). The G.I. Bill, officially named the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 was signed and put into effect by President Franklin D. Roosevelt. According to Foner and Garraty (1991),

The G.I. Bill was created to help veterans of World War II. It established hospitals, made low-interest mortgages available and granted stipends covering tuition and expenses for veterans attending college or trade schools. From 1944 to 1949, nearly 9 million veterans received close to \$4 billion from the bill's

unemployment compensation program. The education and training provisions existed until 1956, while the Veterans' Administration offered insured loans until 1962. The Readjustment Benefits Act of 1966 extended these benefits to all veterans of the armed forces, including those who had served during peacetime (p. 1).

According to the US Department of Veteran Affairs, The Post 9/11 G.I. Bill provides up to 36 months of educational benefits, generally payable up to 15 years. The requirement for this benefit is 90 days of aggregate active duty service after September 10, 2001. The US Department of Veteran Affairs goes on to also discuss that from August 01, 2013-July 31, 2014, public schools' tuition and fees will be covered for in-state students using their G.I. Bill. Private or foreign schools will be covered up to \$19,198.31 per academic year National Maximum.

The Reserve Officer Training Corp. offers four year, three year, and two year academic scholarships for schooling. These scholarships require Cadets to maintain a specific GPA, meet the physical fitness standards of the Armed Forces, and obligates them to commission into their respective branch upon obtaining their bachelor's degree. The ROTC also offers programs for graduate students to commission.

The regular college education is supplemented by military training and courses, which can vary from two to four years. Some ROTC participants receive scholarships for tuition and books. In addition, all ROTC enrollees receive a subsistence allowance (Thirtle, 2001, p. 14).

This program allows students to be in the Reserves while attending college. ROTC cadets are non-deployable until they have obtained their bachelor's degree and commissioned into their respective branch. Along with being able to pay for one's own schooling, soldiers may elect to save some of their educational benefits for their children. This

allows soldiers to pass on unused educational benefits to pay for their children, or spouse's, education.

### Retirement Benefits

In the Armed Forces, twenty years of service is all that is required to retire. Some civilian jobs can take upwards of thirty years. Upon the repeal of REDUX, a military retirement measure, all military personnel may now retire after twenty years of service and receive fifty percent of their basic pay (Kosiak, 2005). This means that retired soldiers receive over half of what they made when they were serving as a retirement check each year. However, if a soldier does not complete the full twenty years of service, (s)he is ineligible to receive this benefit. In addition to a retirement plan, the Survivor Benefits Plan (SBP) was amended by Congress in 1972 which expanded benefits to the survivors of deceased military retirees. The SBP payments were increased to fifty-five percent (Kosiak, 2005). This plan allows families of veterans to be taken care after the service member passes away.

### Housing and Healthcare

Not many businesses offer housing benefits and full healthcare benefits to employees. The Military, however, does offer these incentives. Over the decades, the Military has understood that people want benefits, and these benefits will draw them in to certain employments. According to Military.com, the Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH) is based on duty location, pay grade, and dependency status. The site also

indicates that the BAH's intent is to provide "accurate and equitable housing compensation based on housing costs in local civilian housing markets, and is payable when government quarters are not provided" (Military.com, 2012, p.1). Not many organizations can say they give their members a housing allowance.

The site later goes on to discuss the healthcare benefits TRICARE offers. According to the site, TRICARE "provides health care coverage for medical services, medications, and dental care for military families and retirees and their survivors" (p.1). Therefore, current soldiers, retired soldiers, and the soldiers' families can benefit from this healthcare package. Goarmy.com discusses the differences between Active Duty healthcare/dental packages, and the Reserves/Guard's packages. According to this site, Reserves pay \$51.62 for TRICARE Reserve Select (TRS). This amount is for member-only coverage and is a monthly premium for healthcare coverage. TRS members pay \$195.81 monthly for member and family coverage. Active Duty, however, "will receive comprehensive medical and dental care at no cost." For many individuals, a no-cost healthcare plan is ideal.

### Advancement Opportunities in the Military Ranks

The US Military branches have a rank structure that allows officers and enlisted soldiers to advance into promotions based on time, promotion points, certain schooling (specialty schools like airborne and air assault), and college credits.

Each month the Department of the Army establishes the total number of soldiers to be promoted based on budgetary and strength constraints. The number of promotions is allocated by primary military occupational specialty (PMOS). The Army enlisted promotion system is divided into three sections: decentralized,



semicentralized, and centralized (Williamson, 1999, p.2).

The necessity of certain ranks helps dictate promotions. This idea can pose an issue because it constructs a competition-based promotion system. To be more direct, individuals in the same company, for example, will do whatever necessary to be the best to ensure that they receive a higher evaluation from their superior evaluator. Regardless of rank, every individual in the Armed Forces undergoes annual evaluations. Rank, however, is not based solely on time in service, but also on necessity. A soldier can stay the same rank for many years due to the necessity at that time, or can be promoted quicker in times of war. This undesirable possibility pushes soldiers to strive to be the best. With promotion comes an increase in pay and benefits such as housing allowance. “In addition, since most of the relevant developmental work has focused on achievement motivation--the motive related to performance on tasks involving standards of excellence--we focus on this particular aspect of motivation” (Damon, Eisenberg, Eccles, & Schiefele, 1998, p. 956). This motivational drive that the authors above mentioned can cause individuals to work harder at their jobs in order to receive promotions. As a result, there would be more individuals working harder for a common goal.

### Acceptance in the Military

Acceptance in the military has been questioned for years. Race, sex, and religion have commonly caused issues in American history, as well as military history. However, due to recent laws, regardless of race, sex, sexuality, or religious preferences, the US Armed Forces accepts men and women from all types of backgrounds. The Military's

Don't Ask, Don't Tell Act was signed in 1993 by President Bill Clinton. This Act required homosexuals to keep their sexuality a secret. By signing this Act, President Clinton directed military personnel "don't ask, don't tell, don't pursue, and don't harass." In essence, everything was to be swept under the rug, so to speak. Homosexuals serving in the Armed Forces were not allowed to speak about their sexual orientation or be engaged in homosexual activity. The law made it so commanding officers could not ask about the soldiers' sexual orientation (Burrelli, 2010). In 2010, President Obama signed the repeal of this Act (SLDN, 2012). Currently, it is estimated that there are 66,000 gays, lesbians, and bisexuals serving in the US Military (Kesler, 2010). Not only has homosexuality been an issue that the military has faced for years, but the admittance of females into the military was also looked down upon. In 1997, women accounted for only about 14 percent of the total U.S. Armed Forces personnel (Weinstein, 2000, p. 2). In the book "Conduct Unbecoming: Gays and Lesbians in the U.S. Military," Shilts (2005) says, "In different ways, the presence of women and gays in the ranks challenges the traditional concept of manhood in the military, just as the emergence of women and gays in other fields has done in society at large" (p. 5). The idea that women, homosexuals, and other "lower" individuals are not "fit" to serve has caused a great disturbance in the military. There have been advantages and disadvantages that have arisen. A negative consequence is the idea that an individual will be harassed due to his/her (more likely her) gender or due to his/her sexuality (more likely him) may create a hindrance for some to join. At the same time, some individuals may see this as a challenge, and go against the grain, so to speak. On a positive note, more individuals have the opportunity to join

because sexual orientation no longer matters legally. The individuals cannot be denied entrance due to sexual orientation.

Gender in the military has had even more recent battles than sexuality. In 2013, the military began opening combat arms to females. Until late 2012, early 2013, females were not allowed to be in any combat arms branch. Former Defense Secretary Leon Panetta gave military services until January 2016 to deem any positions to be “special exceptions” for allowing females in to that specific branch. Panetta argued that ‘women, who make up about fifteen percent of the force, have already found themselves in the “reality of combat” during Iraq and Afghanistan’ (FoxNews.com, 2013). However, equality does not just stop at combat arms. Females in the military also have their own standards. Even with current integrations, standards continue to be different. This causes stressors between genders when it comes to the thought of equality, which then has an effect on acceptance. I say this only as a current female in the Armed Forces. The standards I have to meet are not the standards the males have to meet. With that being said, I am able to meet the minimum standards of the males, but physically am not equal to most male physical stamina. This inequality can cause some females to feel unaccepted, in my personal opinion. Gender currently faces many battles in the realm of acceptance, and this can hinder some women from joining this Armed Forces.

### Diversity in the Military

In my personal opinion, job satisfaction can be related to patriotism, and many Americans strive to find a job that they can say they love. When the US was attacked on

11 September 2001, Americans were ready to fight for a cause regardless of benefits. The War on Terror in 2001 will skew the data due to the amount of individuals who enlisted solely based on patriotism, but they will still be used in my research. There are various religious and ethnic groups found within the United States Armed Forces, but some are much more represented than others. According to Kane (2005), a “disproportionate number of the poor members of minority groups make up the enlisted ranks of the military” (p.1). Kane’s comment, however, does not support that majority groups statistically come from lower socioeconomic classes. Regardless of the background in which a soldier was born into, or came from, each seems to be found within the ranks of the military. Middle and lower class background soldiers very well could need to join the Armed Forces due to a continual increase in education, healthcare, and overall living conditions.

With the obvious downsizing in the Armed Forces, competition has increased. The US Military may now pick and choose who they want to work for them, and this calls for the most physically fit, mentally tough, and intellectual individuals. These factors can knock out many individuals who lack higher education from joining, or from simply acquiring the job (s)he wants.

### Macro Level Theories

The theories that have been chosen to use for this study are Conflict Theory and Structural Functionalism. Conflict theory focuses on the competition for social and economic resources. Power is often used to obtain social order according to this theory.

This idea is often utilized in the Military. The Military involves a lot of “do as you’re told” mentality. The ranking structure places individuals in subordination, and soldiers are typically “stripped” of their personal identity. “An Army Of One,” is a saying used in reference to the US Army. The idea is that there is no one person, that everyone is one. However, while being “one,” the individuals are expected to be subordinate to officers and noncommissioned officers, depending on the soldiers’ rank. Conflict Theory would be applicable in this study because soldiers give up their freedoms that the rest of Americans have in order to serve the nation, follow orders, and never step out of rank. “Understanding the regulation of social incentives and threats is likely to be particularly important, because the majority of life experiences, both meaningful and trivial, take place in the context of close relationships” (Gable, Shah, & Strachman, 2008, p.13). The relationships that soldiers build, along with an engrained uniformity, allows the Armed Forces to maintain structure and order.

Structural Functionalism is a theory that sees society as parts of a working whole. Each part makes up the entire component. This theory can be used with the idea of “Army of One.” Each branch of the military is seen as an acting part of the whole. The whole is the Military, and the parts are the branches in this analogy. Each branch must function in accordance to what they are told, but they are all working towards to common goal of maintaining the safety of this great nation. This function creates the metaphorical organism. Conflict will be the most used theory in this study due to the fact that people must choose to accept the life of the military, or they cannot be a part of it. The individual must follow orders, give orders, and always answer to someone higher than his/herself.

Each action will have a reaction, and the individual must decide what course of action needs to be taken. Some may ask, why does it matter? Why does the military strive for structure and uniformity? The military understands that the whole cannot work without all parts in synchronization with the other. Everyone must do his/her part, all the way down from a newly enlisted soldier up to the highest-ranking officer, to make the military work. It is this teamwork that allows the United States to have such a successful Armed Forces.

#### Hypotheses:

When I thought about the Armed Forces when conducting this research, I thought about my most vivid memory of the military in my lifetime. In 2001, the US was attacked on its own soil. I was in the fourth grade when this occurred. I remember seeing flags on almost every house, “Support our troops” signs in almost every yard and shop, and an overall feeling of patriotism throughout the country. Now, thirteen years later, these patriotic signs are not as common as they once were. Many military propaganda commercials today show soldiers and schooling, instead of simply fighting for our country. Additionally, being a female in the Armed Forces, I know that females are not fully accepted by some males. This can cause a feeling of unfairness and inequality, in my personal opinion. With these factors I have seen in my lifetime, I made my three hypotheses.

Benefits will be more important than the other reasons why men and women joined the Armed Forces. The focus of this hypothesis is on the acquisition of benefits.

Through my survey, I will test to see if benefits were the ultimate factor for why my participants joined the Armed Forces.

An offered paid education will be the main benefit that will influence men's and women's decision to join the Armed Forces. The focus on this hypothesis singles out education benefits as the main beneficial reason why men and women joined the Armed Forces. Through my survey, I will test to see which benefit was more influential in the participants' decision.

Males will state more than females that they are treated fairly in regards to their gender. The focus on this hypothesis is the differences by gender in fairness. Through my survey, I will test to see which gender responds in agreement with the idea of fairness in terms of the soldier's gender.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODS

#### Methods:

##### *Survey*

The survey is an electronic survey that was sent to military personnel in all four branches of the Armed Forces. The survey is 19 questions long and asks questions regarding the participants' satisfaction in the Armed Forces, and reasons that lead them to joining. The survey includes multiple choice, fill in the blank, and a ranking structure. This allows me to see the importance of the reasons I had thought of, and also reasons I did not account for.

##### *Sample*

The sample used for this survey was personnel I knew in the Armed Forces. I sent out an email to 130 individuals who were in the Army, Air Force, and Marines with a link for my survey. I did not have direct contact with Navy. I also utilized snowball sampling to have my survey forwarded on to military personnel that my contacts knew to have a greater chance at receiving a more diverse sample. My final sample included 55 completed responses, a 42.3% response rate of those who were emailed the survey. It



cannot be determined how many people were forwarded the email, however. My results are based primarily on descriptive statistics.

### *Dependent Variables*

*Reasons for joining the Armed Forces.* The dependent variable is reasons for joining the Armed Forces. I measured this variable with two questions. First, respondents were asked the reasons they joined the Armed Forces: patriotism, benefits, acceptance, job promotion, and other. They were asked to check all that apply. Second, respondents were asked to rank the importance of those reasons why they joined. The answer to this question helped me decipher which reason was most influential to the person's decision to joining the Armed Forces.

*Acceptance.* I was able to see how applicants believed (s)he was treated in regards to equal opportunity, gender, age, and religious beliefs. The questions were based on a Likert scale (strongly agree to strongly disagree) on how fairly the individual believed (s)he was treated in regards to equal opportunities, gender, age, and religious beliefs. To examine gender equality in the military, I ran a cross-tabulation on gender and acceptance. These additional variables allowed me to get an idea of respondents' feelings of acceptance, and break down acceptance in terms of gender.

### *Independent Variables*

*Who is represented?* I measured *gender* by male (0) and female (1), and the participants' actual *age* instead of using a range. I measured how long the individual has

spent time in the military through a grouping of years: 2 years or less, 3 to 5 years, 6 to 8 years, 9 to 11 years, or 12 plus years. The midpoint for each range is used to calculate the mean. The *branch of the military* the individual is serving is measured by the categories Army, Navy, Marines, or Air Force. *Level of educational attainment* is measured through the categories: less than high school, high school, some college, bachelor degree, or post graduate degree. *Active or Guard/Reserves* is measured through the categories active or guard/reserve. These variables helped me have a better understanding of my participants, and look at the diversity in my sample.

## Results

Below will be three tables that show the results from the survey sent out. Table 1 shows descriptive statistics for all variables, Table 2 shows the feeling of acceptance by respondents, and Table 3 shows the relationship between gender and acceptance.

Table 1  
*Descriptive Statistics*

Variables	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Range
Reasons for Joining the Military			
Patriotism	0.56		0-1
Benefits	0.24		0-1
Acceptance	0.02		0-1
Job Promotion	0.02		0-1

Other	0.17		0-1
Primary Benefits			
Paid Education	0.35		0-1
Healthcare	0.15		0-1
Housing	0.0		0-1
Retirement	0.22		0-1
Benefits not a reason	0.28		0-1
Female (1; 0=male)	0.23		
Age	27.25	9.57	19-56
Time in Service	5.18	5.08	0-15
Branch of Military			
Army	0.72		0-1
Navy	--		
Air Force	0.07		0-1
Marines	0.21		0-1
Level of Education			
High School/GED	0.13		0-1
Some College	0.48		0-1
Bachelors	0.33		0-1

Graduate Degree	0.06	0-1
Active (1; Guard/Reserve=0)	0.53	

The table above shows the descriptive statistics of the variables used in my survey. Overall I had 64 surveys started, and 55 completed. When asked what reason was most applicable in influencing the participant to join the Armed Forces, 56% stated Patriotism was most applicable. Patriotism was followed by Benefits (24%), Acceptance (2%), Job Promotion (2%) and finally “Other” (17%). Of the 17% who declared “Other” as their main reason for joining, many wrote that Family Connections/Expectations was the reason (s)he joined. When conducting my survey, I had not thought to ask about family connections. After determining which factor was collectively more influential, I then broke down the influences of the primary benefits. From my sample, I was able to determine that a paid education (35%) was the primary benefit that influenced respondents to join the Armed Forces. Retirement was the second highest ranking benefit (22%) followed by Healthcare (15%). Housing was not a reason chosen by my respondents for joining the Armed Forces. With that being said, 28% of the participants stated benefits were not a reason why (s)he joined. Demographically, 23% of my respondents were females, the mean average of age is 27, and the average time in service to the nearest full year was 5 years. In regards to branch, the majority of my applicants were from the Army (72%), followed by Marines (21%), and Air Force (7%). I was

unable to receive any responses from anyone in the Navy; therefore the data cannot be used to reference that branch. In terms of educational attainment for my participants, the majority, 48%, had some college. As a current ROTC Cadet, many of the people asked to participate in this survey are part of the program (cadre and cadet alike). With that being said, an overrepresentation of educational benefits may be possible which would skew my data. Around 33% of my participants had a Bachelor's Degree, 13% had their high school degree/GED, and only 6% had a Graduate Degree. Overall, the Active versus Guard/Reserves was fairly close with 53% of respondents being Active in their respective branch. Table 1 allowed me to get an understanding of the participants that took my survey as well as examine my first two hypotheses. While my sample is in no way representative of the US Military due to my nonprobability sampling technique, this sample does appear to be similar to the military population. Fourteen percent of the military is female (my sample is slightly higher), the average age is 29 (mine is slightly younger at 27), the percent with at least a high school degree is 94%, and the percent with at least a BA/BS is 92% (Defense Manpower Research, 2013).

Table 2

*Acceptance*

#	Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total Responses	Mean
1	There are equal opportunities in the Armed Forces for men AND women	18	14	12	8	2	54	2.30
2	I am treated fairly in the Armed Forces in terms of my gender	29	15	5	4	1	54	1.76
3	I am treated fairly in the Armed Forces in regards to my age	19	21	11	2	1	54	1.98
4	I am treated fairly in the Armed Forces in regards to my religious beliefs	29	21	4	0	0	54	1.54

The data in Table 2 shows respondents' attitudes about acceptance in the military.

Respondents were asked if they felt there are equal opportunities for both males and females, and if the respondent is treated fairly in regards to his/her gender, age, and beliefs. For the first question, "There are equal opportunities in the Armed Forces for men AND women," 33% stated they strongly agreed, 26% stated they agreed, 22%

neither agreed or disagreed, 15% disagreed, and 4% strongly disagreed. These statistics suggest that the majority of individuals agreed to some extent that there was equal opportunity for both males and females. The second question is regarding fairness in terms of gender. Of the participants, 54% stated they strongly agreed they were treated fairly in regards to their gender, 28% agreed, 9% neither agreed or disagreed, 7% disagreed, and 2 % strongly disagreed. Once again, most the data is favorable in agreeing with the statement that the participant is treated fairly in regards to his/her gender. The next question on the Likert scale asked participants if they felt they were treated fairly in regards to their age. Of the 54 participants, 35% strongly agreed, 39% agreed, 20% neither agreed nor disagreed, 4% disagreed, and 2% strongly disagreed. The majority of the participants fell into the agree categories. The last question in the Likert scale asked participants if they felt they were treated fairly in regards to the religious beliefs. None of the participants stated they disagreed or strongly disagreed that they were treated fairly with their religious beliefs. The majority of participants (54%) stated they strongly agreed, 39% stated they agreed, and 7% stated they did not agree or disagree. Statistically, this question shows the strongest consistency towards agreement. The table allowed me to look into different type of acceptances found within the Armed Forces such as fairness in regards to gender.

Table 3

*Acceptance in Gender by Gender*

To what extent do you agree with the following statement: I am treated fairly in the Armed Forces in regards to my gender	Male	Female	Total
Strongly Agree	29	0	29
Agree	11	4	15
Neither Agree nor Disagree	4	1	5
Disagree	2	2	4
Strongly Disagree	0	1	1
Total	46	8	54

Table 3 above shows the relationship between gender and acceptance. By using a cross tabulation, I was able to look at how males and females differ in their opinion of the fairness they receive in regards to their gender. From the table, 63% of males strongly agreed they were treated fairly in terms of their gender, but 0% of females strongly



agreed. When looking at the opposite end of the Likert scale, 0% of males strongly disagreed they were treated fairly, but 12.5% of females strongly disagreed. The males who stated they agreed with the statement were 24%, and the females that agreed were 50%. The males who neither agreed nor disagreed were 9%, while females came in at 12.5%. Finally, 4% of males disagreed, and 25% of females disagreed. The majority of males (87%) stated they were in some level of agreement, whether strongly or simply agreeing, that they were treated fairly in regards to their gender. Females, in contradiction, did not have a clear-cut answer. There were not any females who strongly agreed with the statement, but 50% were in agreement that they were treated fairly, and the other 50% fell below that category showing there are some discrepancies between gender and feeling they are treated fairly due to their gender.

Table 4.

*Satisfaction in Joining the Armed Forces*

Do you regret your choice of joining the Armed Forces?	Response	%
Yes	0	0%
No	54	100%

The table above focuses on the individuals' choice to join the Armed Forces, and their regret if applicable. Each individual was asked, "Do you regret your choice of joining the Armed Forces? Remember, your response is ANONYMOUS." Out of the 54 individuals who responded to this question, all 54 stated that they did not regret their choice for joining. This was the only question from my survey where each individual responded the same way. This table shows that regardless of age, gender, or branch, all of my participants stated they did not regret their choice for joining.

For my results, I looked for information that helped support or refute my given hypotheses. The first hypothesis, benefits will be the main category why men and women joined the Armed Forces was refuted. My data shows that *Patriotism* (56%) was the most important variable on why the participants joined the Armed Forces followed secondly by *Benefits* (24%).

The second hypothesis was that an offered paid education will be the main benefit that will influence men and women's decision to join the Armed Forces. As seen from the data, 35% of applicants who chose Benefits as a reason why they joined the Armed Forces chose education benefits as the main benefit that influenced them to join. *Education benefits* were followed by *Retirement* (22%) and *Healthcare* (15%). This hypothesis is supported with my data.

The third hypothesis was males would state more than females that they are treated fairly in regards to their gender. According to the survey results, the data supports

my hypothesis. Males state more frequently they believed they were treated fairly in regards to their gender. Females were the only gender to strongly disagree to the statement they are treated fairly in regards to her gender.

## CHAPTER 4

### DISCUSSION/CONCLUSION

#### Conclusion

In this study, I examined reasons why men and women continually join the Armed Forces. I used an electronic survey to ask military personnel various questions on what factor made them join, if they feel they are treated equally, and their satisfaction of joining the Armed Forces. Fifty-five individuals who ranged in age from 19 to 56 completed the survey. Of those 55 individuals, 23% were females, 53% were Active Duty in their respective Branch, the mean age was 27, and the mean time in service was 5 years.

My survey helped gather data for me to support or refute my hypotheses. My first hypothesis was that *Benefits* would be the main factor that enticed people to join the Armed Forces. The data gathered does not support this hypothesis. Instead, *Patriotism* was the main independent factor that caused men and women to say they joined the Armed Forces. The only issue with the outcome of this hypothesis is the idea of social desirability. Had I not written in the word “Patriotism,” and simply allowed that to be considered in the “Other,” some may argue that patriotism would not have been the most influential factor my participants chose. My second hypothesis, an offered paid education will be the main benefit that will influence men and women’s decision to join the Armed

Forces, was supported by my data. This could be due to many of the individuals I know who are currently in the Armed Forces are college-aged students. However, with this in mind, it would have seemed that Benefits would have outnumbered Patriotism due to the sample group mainly being in college. The third hypothesis, males will state more than females that they are treated fairly in regards to their gender, was also supported by my data. When running a cross-tabulation, it was apparent that more males collectively believed they were treated fairly in regards to their gender. Females, in contradiction, were not as collective on their beliefs, and a smaller percentage said they agreed with the statement. None of the female respondents stated they strongly agreed, but 12.5% did strongly disagree with the statement. None of the male respondents strongly disagreed.

In addition to my hypotheses, there were a few factors I did not think to add when creating my survey. I had not thought to add family legacy as a reason to join the Armed Forces. Participants who wrote that this was the reason they joined stated that it was expected of them, or it was their “heritage.” Legacy, as seen from my results, was an extremely important factor to some of my participants. Along with legacy, I did not factor race into my research. Race could have been used to run a cross-tabulation on acceptance as well, but I did not think to add this in when I first conducted my survey.

This study, although it cannot be used as a representation of the Armed Forces in this nation, can be used to get an idea of why individuals have joined in recent years. Although patriotism was ultimately the most important reason for joining, a significant minority stated that benefits were also a reason. When ranking the most important benefits, Educational Benefits and Retirement Benefits were the two benefits that

personnel stated were the most important. This data can be important to the government to help finance the contributing factors that are most important to soldiers that are not rewards in themselves like patriotism is.

My research does have its limitations, and therefore, like stated previously, cannot be a representation of men and women in the Armed Forces nationwide. My survey was sent out to individuals I knew in the Army, Marines, and Air Force. I then asked those individuals to forward my survey on to people they knew, thus creating a snowball sample. Another limitation to my research is the average time in service for my sample was 5 years. Therefore, many of the participants have not been in the military very long and were around the college age more than likely. Despite these limitations, however, the distribution of my sample on gender, age, and education does appear similar to that of the active military population.

Ideally, I would send out this survey every three years, and would also retest prior participants to see if their beliefs and ideas have changed over time. Therefore, my study is designed to be a repeated longitudinal study. An electronic survey is the most feasible in this case due to size and diversity in locations where US military personnel are stationed. Also, some branches, like the Army, require personnel to take numerous electronic surveys on an annual basis through the AKO (Army Knowledge Online), and other online programs. My survey would be electronic questions that would ask both generalized and specific questions. (See Appendix for survey). It would use a combination of fill in the blank, ranking, yes/no, and what option applies best to the participant. My survey can help us determine more about the individual and his/her

reasoning for joining the Armed Forces. This can then determine what factors helped keep this person in the military, or what caused them to want to leave if applicable. I would also utilize questions from my prior sample that I had not thought to use, like family influence as a reason for joining.

My sample would be collected through military personnel in all four branches, and serving active duty, guard, or reserve. My goal would be to use 1,000 military personnel per branch. To randomly select these personnel, I would use the military identification number given to each soldier and place that number into a randomized algorithm to select 1,000 participants. An action like this would require full cooperation with all military branches in order for me to receive the necessary data I require to conduct this research. My sample would be more diverse this way and would be less likely to have sampling error.

The ideal sample described above would give me data to compare over periods of time to see if motives for joining the Armed Forces stay the same or change over time. By using new and previous samples, I could compare the data and see what correlations can be made. The purpose of studying these correlations would be to give feedback to the military to help them understand the upcoming soldiers and what will help entice more men and women to join the Armed Forces.

To précis, this study shows that Patriotism is the most important reason people join the military. Due to the commitment and sacrifice it takes to be in the military, this intrinsic motivation is arguably the most important. This research also shows that 100% of those surveyed are satisfied with their decision to join the military. Most also think

they are treated equally with regard to age and religion, however, women are a bit divided on their report of equal treatment. Ideally, if I could do this study on a larger scale over time, I would use the data to help the Armed Forces understand what is most important to the individuals who are joining the Armed Forces. With that knowledge, the different branches could expand on these results and help broaden their appeal to men and women. The more individuals the Armed Forces could choose from, the better off each branch would be in finding the best this nation has to offer.



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## APPENDIX

Below is a set of questions we will use to help conduct research that may benefit the military. Please read each question carefully and select the most appropriate answer.

There is no right or wrong answer. Please answer each question, and please be truthful in your answers. There is no time limit on this survey.

**1. What is your gender?**

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female

**2. What is your age?**

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**3. How long have you been serving in the military?** (Use your last completed full year)

- ☐ 2 years or less
- ☐ 3 to 5 years
- ☐ 6 to 8 years
- ☐ 9 to 11 years
- ☐ 12 or more years

**4. What branch of the military are you serving in?**

- ☐ Army
- ☐ Air Force

☐ Marines

☐ Navy

**5. Are you active or reserve/guard?**

☐ Active

☐ Reserve/Guard

**6. What is your highest level of educational attainment?**

☐ Less than high school degree

☐ High school degree

☐ Some college

☐ Bachelors

☐ Post graduate degree (Masters, PhD, M.D., etc)

**7. Out of the following, which is the MOST applicable for why you joined the military?**

☐ Patriotism

☐ Benefits

☐ Acceptance

☐ Job Promotion

☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

8. **Rank the following from 1 to 4 in order of importance to why you joined the military** (1=most important; 4=least important; If your reason for joining is not listed below please fill in the blank with your reason; **0=not important**).

\_\_\_\_ Patriotism

\_\_\_\_ Benefits

\_\_\_\_ Acceptance

\_\_\_\_ Job Promotion

\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

9. **If benefits were one of the reasons you chose to join the military, please fill in which benefits were important to you.** (If benefits were not a reason you chose the military, skip to question eleven)

☐ Housing Benefits

☐ Healthcare Benefits

☐ Retirement Benefits

☐ Educational Benefits

10. **Of the benefits, please rank in order from 1 to 4 which benefit was more influential for you to join the Armed Forces** (1=most influential; 4=least influential).

\_\_\_\_ Housing Benefits

\_\_\_\_ Healthcare Benefits

\_\_\_\_ Retirement Benefits

\_\_\_\_ Educational Benefits

**11. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements:**

**There are equal opportunities in the Armed Forces for men AND women**

☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neither agree or disagree ☐ Disagree  
☐ Strongly Disagree

**I am treated fairly in the Armed forces in terms of my gender**

☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neither agree or disagree ☐ Disagree  
☐ Strongly Disagree

**I am treated fairly in the Armed Forces in regards to my age**

☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neither agree or disagree ☐ Disagree  
☐ Strongly Disagree

**I am treated fairly in the Armed Forces in regards to my religious beliefs**

☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neither agree or disagree ☐ Disagree  
☐ Strongly Disagree

**12. Do your views on equality in the military affect your outlook on continuing  
your military career?**

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

**13. Do you feel you will be promoted in a reasonable time?**

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No



**14. Have you received educational benefits due to joining the Armed Forces?**

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Not yet but I plan to

**15. Are you satisfied with you current MOS (Military Occupational Specialty)?**

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

**16. If you had the opportunity to switch your MOS would you?** If no skip to question 18.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

**17. Would you change your MOS to something that would prepare you for a civilian occupation?**

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ My occupation does prepare me for a civilian occupation
- ☐ My civilian occupation correlates with my military occupation (ie. Doctor, lawyer, vet, etc.)

**18. Do you regret your choice of joining the Armed Forces? Remember, your response is ANONYMOUS**

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

**19. In your opinion, what could be implemented in the military to help ensure soldiers do not regret their choice for joining the Armed Forces?** (Please write as much as you think is necessary. If you do not believe anything needs to be changed, please write “N/A”)

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